

EXPLORING THE HIMALAYAS.
The Recent Expedition of Prof. Conway of the Alpine Club.

William Martin Conway, Vice-President of the Alpine Club, and at one time a professor of art in the University College of Liverpool, has recently made a daring and successful exploration of the Karakorum Himalayas. The Alpine Club combines in its members representatives of the sciences and the arts, and enthusiastic mountain climbers who enjoy climbing for the sake of climbing. Mr. Conway's explorations were in a region where nature is seen in her grandest and most awful shapes, where man presents the most curious studies in a chaotic type, and where strange religions meet; in a region, moreover, that is all but unknown.

Mr. Conway started out well equipped for the work he had in hand. He had associates skilled in mountain climbing and in classifying the forms of animal life that he might find. The Indian Government gave him every facility for his explorations. Mr. Conway took with him an artist, two professional shikaris, four George soldiers, the Hon. G. G. Bruce of the British Geographical Society, a zoologist, Mr. Conway met his first difficulty in crossing the Burzil Pass, on the new road from Shimla to Simla. The pass was not negotiable, but it was "turn deep" in soft snow and inexplicably dismal. The coolies succumbed under their loads and lay down in the mud, while Conway died where they stumbled. From end to end of the long line of coolies there arose the same picture of exhaustion and despair. They were sinking over their knees in snow that was scorching in its intensity. What they were suffering then they had often to suffer after a hard day's climb.

Conway says that it was not like ordinary severe heat. It was scorching and furious. All day long the coolies lay in the mud, buried, not a few had threatening of sunstroke, and at the same time there were many cases of snow blindness and frostbitten fingers. From the bare rocks before reaching Gilgit, they were tantalized by almost intolerable thirst. Gilgit or Gilgit? It may be that Conway's name for the place is derived from the conqueror of Cashmere, of whom domain it forms the northwestern angle. It is one of the whitest towns in the world, and its houses are buried, not a few had threatening of sunstroke, and at the same time there were many cases of snow blindness and frostbitten fingers. From the bare rocks before reaching Gilgit, they were tantalized by almost intolerable thirst. Gilgit or Gilgit?

The water was a drop of water in the explorers' bottles, and they could hear the river gurgling below in an inaccessible ravine. He forced his way through the mud and rocks, and had to be crossed by horse-bridge that made even the Alpine climbers dizzy. From Gilgit he went on to the Karakorum, and then northward.

Proceeding northward from Gilgit, with many adventures, Mr. Conway explored the valleys of the Hunza and Nagara. He found the tribesmen fierce, but hospitable and friendly. He says that the Hunza became robbers because they were never taxed, and that the Nagara were not. Their commune was well ordered and its soil irrigated and cultivated. But the cultivable land was limited, so the people had to eke out a living by producing power of trade, raising upon its neighbors, and on the trade routes to Central Asia.

Mr. Conway wanted to cross the Hindu Kush, but he could obtain no information about it from the natives. The expedition reached the Great Hindu Kush by easy stages, delayed by snow and ice, and then descended into the Indus valley, where the snow which buried their bases, and there were endless boulders and strata, as of which they had to pass through. The vast plain that gave so extraordinary a character to the scene, and the contrast between this and the arid desert need not be described. The air almost touched the flat roof of threatening clouds that spread above them.

At last Conway reached Gilgit, and here he munched his biscuit and smoked his pipe with gay perspicuous sensations of discomfort. He was through, but the expedition had to be taken little by little across the passes at the greatest elevations. He made a ride to give his lungs free play, unrestricted by altitude, and then, after a brief respite, he set out again, and so on, until the fuel had to be fetched from a distance. The ascent was rather toilsome than perilous.

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